

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

H.R. 3998 OBEY/MATSUI AMERICAN HEALTH SECURITY PARTNERSHIP ACT OF 1998

HON. DAVID R. OBEY

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 5, 1998

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, last year, the Congress passed a proposal that was meant to take care of the health insurance needs of poor children. This year, the Congress is looking at ways to reform managed care so that the 85% of Americans in HMOs can be guaranteed quality health care based on need and not on profit margins. These are important steps but we need to, and we can go further.

Good health is one of God's greatest blessings. Those of us who have it have an obligation to see that every American who doesn't can walk into a hospital or a doctor's office and get the health care they need without begging. Over forty-one million Americans are without health insurance, and that number is rising by about one million every year. Many more have insurance today but are afraid of losing it. There is no reason why we cannot figure out a way to assure that every American has and will be able to keep affordable health insurance coverage.

That's why Congressman BOB MATSUI of California and I are sponsoring the American Health Security Partnership Act which is based on the premise that if revenue is raised from tobacco companies, it ought to be used to help see to it that every person has secure health insurance.

This legislation creates a cooperative cost sharing partnership between the federal government, state governments, employers and individuals. With each sharing in the cost and bearing a reasonable load, we can finally end the gap in health insurance coverage and put a stop to the cost shifting games that go on when the cost of providing care to the uninsured is shifted to those who do have insurance.

In the best Wisconsin LaFollette Progressive Tradition we would use the states as laboratories of democracy to help find alternative health care reform models that work. States will have maximum flexibility to make choices on what devices to use, what systems to implement, and how best to use the federal funds for their citizens. But, the main federal requirement is that everyone in the state will have access to health insurance that is at least as good as what is available to Members of Congress under the Federal Employees Health Benefits Plan (FEHBP).

Employers need to play a role too. That's why this legislation requires large employers to provide health insurance coverage for their workers and it provides funds that States can use to help small businesses expand health care coverage for their employees even though small business is not required to do so by this bill.

But this is not a something for nothing approach. Individuals have a responsibility to get

health insurance and to the extent possible, pay for some of the cost of that insurance. Cost shifting contributes greatly to the rising costs of health care and the only means of putting an end to it is to ensure that every individual has health insurance coverage.

Many American families feel threatened by health care costs and many others are afraid of losing the health insurance coverage they have. The purpose of this bill is to strengthen the health care security of every American family. We do that by creating a 4 legged stool comprised of the federal government, the State government, employers and individuals.

If there is going to be a tobacco settlement of any kind, the most logical use of that settlement is to make sure the average American family has health care coverage when they need it.

Here are some of the elements of the plan.

It establishes a federal and state partnership in which states have the flexibility to decide how everyone in the state is covered by health insurance. The rules would be set by the states and not the federal government.

The only federal requirement is that health insurance coverage must be at least as good as what is currently available for Members of Congress and other federal employees under the Federal Employee Health Benefits Plan.

Farmers and people who are self-employed will be able to deduct 100% of their health insurance costs.

Workers who do not have employer subsidized health insurance will also be able to deduct 100% of their health insurance costs.

Businesses with 100 or more employees will be required to offer health care coverage to employees and their families.

It is paid for in two ways. A portion of the tobacco settlement would be used to establish a cost sharing agreement with the federal government and the states. That amount would be supplemented by a 1% increase on corporations with over \$10 million in taxable income. Out of the one million corporations in the country, fewer than 3,000 pay income taxes at the top rate and would be affected by this increase.

That cost is a small price to pay to meet the moral responsibility that any ethical society has to ensure that all Americans receive the health care they need simply because they are God's creatures.

CONGRESSWOMAN NANCY PELOSI
PAYS TRIBUTE TO PIONEERS
WHO BUILT ISRAEL ON ITS 50TH
ANNIVERSARY

HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, June 5, 1998

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, our distinguished colleague and my friend and neighbor in San Francisco, Congresswoman NANCY PELOSI, is the author of an excellent article

marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the modern state of Israel. The article, which appeared in the San Francisco Chronicle on Wednesday, June 4, is an outstanding discussion of the commitment to the dream of the state of Israel by those pioneers who, from the ashes of the Holocaust, made the desert bloom.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that Congresswoman PELOSI's article be placed in the RECORD. I commend this article to my colleagues, and I urge them to give it careful and thoughtful attention.

[From the San Francisco Chronicle,
Thursday, June 4, 1998]

DIVERSE GROUP OF PIONEERS BUILT A DREAM
(By Nancy Pelosi)

As Israel celebrates its 50th anniversary, we in the United States join in celebrating 50 years of friendship, a mutually beneficial alliance and the great future possibilities that exist for the U.S.-Israel partnership.

In looking back over 50 years, it is useful to remind ourselves of Israel's short history. In many ways, it mirrors America's early days as well as those of San Francisco, a city built by pioneers and blessed with diverse and skilled citizens. What we in the United States and the citizens of Israel now take for granted was, only a short time ago, nothing but an improbable dream. Like those who founded our nation, Israel's founding leaders sought to build a nation that would serve as an example to the world and a new home to those who fled oppression and tyranny.

After only 50 years of independence, a sophisticated, stable, and reliable Western democracy has been built in the sands of the Middle East, a region that cannot claim any other democracies. Israel has developed a world-class educational system and a high-tech economy. During the past 50 years, Israel has absorbed immigrants and refugees from more than 100 countries, people with different cultures, languages and backgrounds to create a nation with a common language and a 98 percent literacy rate. Israel has a challenge and a responsibility to continue to combat prejudice and respect the cultural heritage of Jews from other countries as well as the rights of Arabs in Israel.

As a nation of immigrants who have sacrificed for freedom, independence and democracy, we Americans have shared in the tragedies and triumphs of the Israeli people during their first 50 years. In fact, Israel's survival would not have been possible without the help and friendship of the U.S. government. Israel continues to face existential threats and challenges; her future cannot, unfortunately, be taken for granted.

Only seven years ago, SCUD missiles fired by Saddam Hussein were directed at Israel's population centers but, fortunately, caused minimal damage. Since those attacks, Saddam Hussein has made no secret of the fact that he is seeking more accurate missiles and the biological and chemical arsenal to cause devastation within Israel.

Iran is well on the way to acquiring the technology needed to build its own accurate missiles as well as actively seeking a nuclear, biological and chemical weapons capability. So, in many ways, the challenges to Israel of the next 50 years are far greater than those of the first 50.

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